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T H E

Historical Catechism :

C O N T A I N I N G

Ingenious Answers to many notable Questions of several wonderful Matters in ancient History.

As, What is the opinion of our historians about the apple old mother Eve tempted Adam with. Why the devil should take the shape of a serpent. Of the building the tower of Babel, nine miles round, by five hundred thousand men, who left off, being confounded in their language.

Also, several questions about Sodom and Gomorrah, Noah's ark, and Solomon's temple; informing us, from scripture, what day that was that the like was never before, nor shall be again.

A full account of the destruction of Jerusalem, and how the Jews were dispersed and scattered over the face of the earth.

Josephus's and the Romans account of our Saviour, and the miracles wrought at his birth; with a wonderful apparition that appeared at Mahomer's tomb.

The wonderful prophecies of the ten sibyls.

A marvellous relation of the seven sleepers, who slept above two hundred years.

L O N D O N :
PRINTED FOR ROBERT TURNER,
IN THE YEAR M.DCC.LXXXII.
PRICE TWO-PENCE.

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T H E

Historical Catechism, &c.

Q U E S T I O N.

***WHAT** apple, or fruit, was that which Adam ate in Paradise, and brought sin and death upon him and his posterity?*

ANSWER. It is uncertain, for the holy scripture mentions it not. The authors vary in their opinions: some say it is a Persian apple, growing where Paradise is situated; but the most likely is what the Romans believe, which is a musk apple; and, wherever it is cut, a crucifix appears in it.

A 2

Q. *Why*

Q. Why did the devil assume the shape of a serpent, rather than of any other creature, when he tempted Eve? For it is very strange that the devil, being a spirit, who could assume any shape, should take upon him that of so hateful and despicable a creature as a serpent, and not the shape of a delightful and familiar creature.

A. You must consider the difference of this creature since Adam's fall; for, before that time, the serpent was as familiar with Adam and Eve as the bird is now with the boy; therefore the devil assumed that shape, thinking thereby to gain his end the sooner, which proved to be true.

Q. Why is the serpent so hateful and despicable now?

*A. From the words which God spoke when he cursed it: "Because thou hast
" done this, upon thy belly shalt thou go,
" and eat dust all the days of thy life; and
" I will put enmity between thy seed and
" the seed of the woman," which remains still in the nature of every man and woman.*

Q. What accounts do the ancients give of Babel?

A. It

A. It was the most famous structure after Noah's flood; for Nimrod persuaded the people to build a large and fine edifice to resist the fury of a second deluge; but this counsel was not generally received by Heber's family, who opposed such a presumptuous attempt. However, they began to raise the tower of Babel 461 paces from the ground, its circumference being agreeable. The passage up was winding and broad; there being not only room for horses, carts, &c. but lodgings for man and beast, with grass and corn fields. And wonderful it was to consider, that 8 persons only came out of Noah's ark, and this building was carried on by 500,000 men, the foundation being nine miles round. But God, by the confusion of tongues, put a stop to their works, one not being able to understand another: which is thus wittily expressed by the poet:

Bring me a trowel, quoth one, quickly, quick:
One brings up a hammer. Hew this brick,
Another bids; and then they cleave a tree.
Make fast this rope; and then they let it flee.
One calls for planks, another mortar lacks;
They give the first a stone, the last an axe.

One would have nails, and him a spade they give:
 Another asks a saw, and gets a sieve.
 Thus crossly cross'd, they call'd and rail'd in vain;
 What one hath made the other spoils again:
 This made them leave their work, and, like mad
 fools,
 Scatter their stuff and tumble down their tools.

Q. What country is reported to be the most desolate and solitary in all the world?

A. The land about Sodom and Gomorrah, where there were thirteen cities built on a fruitful soil, a pleasant paradise: but they sinned greatly; wherefore God rained brimstone and fire from heaven, which destroyed their whole land, leaving not one stone upon another to shew their former glory, there remaining a sulphureous smell that stifles the birds, beasts, and fishes. There are apples of a beautiful colour, but within they are full of sulphureous ashes.

Q. Why were mens lives longer before Noah's flood than since?

A. As the world declines, so does the nature of all therein: as the planets were more glorious, so were mens bodies: meteors,

meteors, comets, and eclipses, produce diseases which were then seldom known. The earth was more fruitful: plants, herbs, and vegetables, were more used, and their virtues stronger: people drank more water, and ate less meat; the excess of which has destroyed more than the sword, pestilence, and famine.

Q. What day was that, the like whereof was never before, nor shall be again?

A. When Joshua prayed, the sun stood still, making the day 36 hours long, till he overcame his enemies.

Q. What part of the earth was that which was seen only four times by mankind?

A. The bottom of the river Jordan: divided by God, and passed over by the children of Israel; and afterwards seen by Joshua, by Elijah, and last by Elisha.

Q. What do historians write of Solomon's temple?

A. The temple was built on a rocky mountain, and the foundation 600 cubits deep; the stones 50 cubits high; porches double, supported by stately pillars, 25 cubits high, of one piece of curious marble; the tops of cedar. The porches were 20 cubits

in the sky.

cubits broad, and the compass six furlongs. The courts, of fine work, paved with all sorts of stones, like lattices, 3 cubits high; and all the gates covered with plates of gold. The Holy of holies was in the midst: the first gate was 20 cubits high, and had 20 doors: all the fore parts were gilded, and within covered with fine gold: about the wall was a golden vine, with clusters like grapes, all of gold, each cluster being six feet long. It had golden gates, and hinges wrought with gold, velvet, scarlet, silks; and all the fabric was covered with massy gold. — The top was set with rods of gold, sharp like pikes, lest birds should sit thereon and defile it. The temple was built by king Solomon, and afterwards plundered by Shishak, king of Egypt, and again by Joash, king of Israel, in the reign of Amasiah; after this by Ahaz, king of Judah, to present Piglath Pilezar with the treasure thereof. And, lastly, Nebuchadnezzar laid this temple and city even with the ground. It was rebuilt by Nehemiah; and pillaged by Burgoses, then by Ptolemy, &c. Yet, after all, Herod the Great rebuilt and enlarged this city, new
built

built the temple, and left it more stately and glorious than in the days of Solomon. But, about forty years after the death of our Saviour, the sins of the Jews being come to their height, it was destroyed by Titus, son of Vespasian, emperor of Rome, who would willingly have saved the Holy of holies; and, entering into it, said, "Now I well perceive that this is no less than the dwelling-place of the King of heaven; and now I do not wonder that the Jews fought so earnestly in defence thereof, nor that the Gentiles sent their gold and silver to this temple, it surpassing all the temples that ever I saw." But some of the seditious Jews slew the guards that he had set to preserve it, and threw firebrands in at the windows, which put it all in flames. Wherefore Titus, in wrath, said, "The God of heaven, who is God of this house, take vengeance of the seditious Jews, whose wicked deeds have brought this evil upon them."

Q Where is it said, that all strangers, who travel to Jerusalem, are buried when they die?

A. In Aceldama, or the Field of Blood, which was purchased with the thirty pieces of
of

of silver that Judas betrayed our Saviour for: the field having such a quality, that, if a carcase be laid therein, it will be consumed in forty-eight hours.

Q. What were the dreadful signs and wonders that foretold the destruction of Jerusalem?

A. The year before the Romans came, a bright star appeared over the temple, as if a man had held many drawn swords in his hand; and the temple was as light as at noon-day seven nights together. A heifer, being knocked down for a sacrifice, brought forth a lamb. A man's face was seen, in the sanctum sanctorum, looking very sternly. Four chariots, with horsemen, were seen fighting in the air. In the temple the priests heard a terrible voice to say, "Come, let us go out of the temple; let us hasten hence." The Jews, remaining still stubborn, regarded no signs till destruction fell upon them.

Q. Is there not a strange relation of one Joshua, or Jesus, the son of Ananias?

A. Yes: this Jesus, coming up to the tabernacles before the war began, broke out in this exclamation: "A voice from the East, a voice from the West, a
" voice

“ voice to Jerusalem, a voice to the temple, a voice to all nations.” Hereupon the governor of Judea caused him to be whipped till his bones were seen ; and, at every lash, he cried, “ Woe, woe, to Jerusalem !” Another time he went round the walls, crying, “ Woe, woe, to this city ; woe to the temple ; woe to myself !” and a stone came and killed him at that instant.

Q. What became of the Jewish nations after that wicked act of crucifying the Lord of life ?

A. God’s judgements, according to their deserts and our Saviour’s prophecy, overtook them ; for the Romans, with a mighty army, besieged, plundered, and burnt, the city and temple ; and destroyed vast numbers of them by famine, fire, and sword, the rest becoming a scattered people over the earth.

Q. Was there ever any attempt made to rebuild the temple ?

A. Yes : Julian the Apostate, emperor of Rome, resolved to rebuild it in opposition to Christ’s prophecy, “ That one stone should not be left upon another.” But, when the workmen were laying the foundation

tion, a dreadful earthquake happened, so that the work and workmen were all destroyed.

Q. What did they discover at laying the foundation?

A. There was a stone which slipt from its place, and discovered the mouth of a cave, wherein was found a book very fresh, wrapped up in a linen cloth, which the Jews and Gentiles opened, and there was written, "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God." This book contained all the gospel St. John had declared.

Q. What account does Josephus give of our Saviour?

A. That Jesus was a wise man, shewed wonders, and taught the truth to those that followed him.

Q. What miracles happened at the birth of our Saviour?

A. At his birth, the temple, dedicated to the heathen goddess, fell to the ground. The Romans enquired of their oracle, Apollo, when it was first built, how long it should stand: who answered, "Till a virgin should bring forth a son," which made them think it would stand for ever. St. Jerom

rom says, “ when the virgin Mary fled with
“ her son to Egypt, all the images of the
“ gods fell down, and the oracles and the
“ devils ceased.”

*Q. What is farther related of Christ in
Scripture?*

A. Dionysius, being at Athens the day
of Christ's death, said this eclipse was un-
natural; and, that the world either was at
an end, or that the God of nature then suf-
fered.

*Q. What account do the Romans give of
Christ?*

A. In the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, Len-
tulus, the Roman governor of Judea, wrote
the following letter:

“ THERE appeared, in our days, a
“ man of great virtue, called Jesus Christ,
“ who is yet living amongst us; and, by
“ the people, is called a prophet, but his
“ disciples call him the son of God. He
“ raiseth the dead, and cureth all manner
“ of diseases; a man, of stature somewhat
“ tall and comely, with a reverend counte-
“ nance, such as beholders may both fear
“ and love. His hair is of the colour of a
“ chesnut full ripe, and plain down almost
“ to the ears; but, thence downward, some-

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“ what

“ what curled, but more orient of colours,
 “ waving about his shoulders. In the
 “ midst of his head goes a seam of hair,
 “ parting like a Nazarite’s; his forehead
 “ very plain and smooth; his face without
 “ either spot or wrinkle, beautified with a
 “ comely red; his nose and mouth so formed,
 “ that nothing can be reprehended;
 “ his beard thick, the colour of the hair of
 “ his head; his eyes grey and quick. In
 “ reproving he is severe, in counselling
 “ courteous, fair spoken, pleasant in
 “ speech, mixed with gravity: it cannot
 “ be remembered he was ever seen to
 “ laugh, but many have seen him weep.
 “ In proportion of body, well shaped and
 “ strait; his hands and arms very delectable
 “ to behold; in speaking, very temperate,
 “ modest, and wise; a man, for
 “ his singular beauty, far exceeding the
 “ sons of men.”

Q. Is there not a strange relation of an apparition that happened at Mahomet’s tomb?

A. Mr. Knowles, in the history of the Turks, affirms, as a certain truth, that, in 1620, a surprising vision was seen at Medina, in Arabia, where Mahomet lies buried, which continued twenty days, terrifying

ing the whole country; for, on September 20, in that year, a great tempest of wind, rain, and thunder, happened about midnight; but, when the sky became clear, the people might plainly read in it, in Arabian characters, these words, “Oh! why will ye delight in lies?” And, between two and three in the morning, appeared a woman clothed in white, seeming to be encompassed with the sun, having a cheerful countenance, with a book in her hand. Over against her were seen armies of Turks, Persians, Arabians, and other Mahometans, in battle array, ready to fight with her; but she, keeping her station, only opened the book; at which the armies fled, and presently all the lamps about Mahomet’s tomb went out; for, when the vision vanished, an hour before sunrise, a murmuring wind was heard, to which they imputed the extinguishing of the lamps.

Q. What event happened thereupon?

A. The ancient pilgrims of Mahomet’s race were much amazed to understand the meaning of it, when one of the priests made this oration.— “The world never had but three true religions, every one

“ of which had a prophet: first, God
“ chose the Jews, and did wonders for
“ them in Eygpt, and brought them
“ thence by their prophet Moses, and
“ prescribed unto them a law, wherein
“ he would have maintained them, if
“ they had not been obstinate and rebel-
“ lious in falling into idolatry; where-
“ upon he gave them over, and dispersed
“ them upon the face of the earth. Then,
“ presently after, God sent a new prophet,
“ which taught them the Christian reli-
“ gion to perfection. This good man
“ the Jews condemned and crucified for
“ a seducer of the people. That the mo-
“ narchs of the world bowed down to
“ this very title; but, in process of time,
“ they grew as ill as the Jews: the church
“ being disjointed, and committing ido-
“ latry again, God was weary of them
“ also, and sent divisions amongst them,
“ and forsook them. Yet God is still
“ governor of the world, and himself has
“ raised up another prophet, even your
“ great Mahomet, giving him our na-
“ tions; so, no doubt, we shall be happy
“ for ever, if we can serve this God, and
“ take warning by the fall of others.

“ But,

“ But, alas! we have err’d in every point,
“ so that God hath manifested his wrath
“ by keeping a prophet from us, who
“ prefixed a time to return with all hap-
“ piness to his people; so that there are
“ forty years past by our account.

“ And, doubtless, this fearful vision is
“ a presage of some great troubles and al-
“ terations; for, either the opening the
“ book in the woman’s hand doth foretel
“ our falling from the first intent of our
“ laws, whereat the men depart as if con-
“ founded with the guilt of their own
“ consciences; or else it signifies some
“ other book, wherein we have not yet
“ read, and against which no power shall
“ prevail: so that I fear our religion will
“ be proved corrupt, and our prophet,
“ Mahomet, an impostor. And then
“ Christ, whom they talk of, shall shine
“ forth as the sun, and set up his name
“ for ever.”

Q. What became of this notable priest?

A. The company that heard him
charged him with blasphemy, and he was
put to death. This relation was con-
firmed by Iass Chior, a converted Turk,
who came over to London in 1630; and

added, that the grand seignior commanded none to speak of it upon pain of death.

Q. What were those women, called sibyls, who prophesied of our Lord some hundreds of years before he was born?

A. They were reckoned to be ten in number, and to have the spirit of prophecy, and uttered many speeches concerning Christ; although the heathens, to whom they were spoken, understood them not; yea, they are thought of some importance for confirming the truth of the Christian religion, though they are often alleged, by the fathers of the primitive church, against the faith of Jesus Christ.

Q. What was the first sibyl's name, and what the prophecy?

A. She was called the Persian, and prophesied thus:

From Adam unto Noah, it appears,
Were fifteen hundred six and fifty years,
To make up the first age; and, from the flood,
Two hundred ninety-six are understood.
To Abraham, from him, Israel to free
From Egypt, five hundred added three.

Till

Till king Solomon's temple the first stone
Was five hundred years and eighty-one.
Four hundred and four years then will there be
To Babylon's distress'd captivity.
The sixth age from that bondage will be seen
To make up six hundred and fifteen:
In which year from a Virgin shall be born
The Prince of Peace, bound with a wreath of
thorn.
Him the seventh age shall follow and attend,
Till the world's frame dissolve, and time shall
end.

Q. What was the name of the second sibyl?

A. She was called the Lydian, and spake thus:

A king, a priest, a prophet, all these three
Shall meet in one sacred divinity:
Shall be espous'd to flesh: oh! who can scan
This mystery, uniting God and man?
When this birth into the world shall come,
He'll the great god of oracles strike dumb.

Q. What was the name of the third sibyl?

A. She was named the Cumean, and spake thus:

The

The ancient of days shall yield to time,
 And the new creator to a new creation;
 The Deity and Godhead most divine
 Becometh man, and dies to ransom every nation.

Q. What was the name of the fourth sibyl?

A. The sibyl of Delphos prophesied thus:

An angel shall descend, and say,
 Bless'd Mary, hail to thee!
 Thou shalt conceive, bring forth a son,
 Yet a pure virgin be.
 Three gifts the Chaldees to thy son
 Shall offer with great piety:
 Mirth to a man, gold to a king,
 And to Christians charity.

Q. What was the name of the fifth sibyl?

A. The sibyl of Samos, prophesying thus:

The world will in six thousand years expire:
 By water once, the second time by fire.
 The first two thousand void: the next the law:
 The next two under the Messiah's awe.
 And, as repose by sabbath is express'd,
 Sun, moon, and stars, all things, shall then have
 rest.

Q. What

Q. What was the sixth sibyl called?

A. The Cumaxian, and spoke thus:

When Rome shall in dominion grow high,
Her proud towers form seven, still braving the sky,
And subdue all the world; in those bless'd days
Shall come a King of kings, and he shall raise
Another generation, greater far
Than all the monarchies before him were.

Q. What was the seventh sibyl's name?

*A. She was called the European sibyl,
and prophesied thus:*

When the great King of all the earth shall have
No place on earth by which he may be
known,

When he shall come all mortal men to save,
Shall find his own life by the world o'er-
thrown.

Q. What was the eighth sibyl's name?

*A. She derived her name from the river
Tiber, in Rome, and prophesied thus:*

Why at those trifles stands the world amaz'd,
And hath on them with admiration gaz'd?
Then wonder, when, the troubled world t'appease,
He shall descend, who made them that made these.

Q. What

Q. What was the ninth sibyl's name?

A. The Assyrian sibyl, born in Babylon, prophesying thus :

By the great oracles the time's assign'd,
When God himself, in pity to mankind,
Shall come from heaven, and be on earth incarnate,

Innocent, and a lamb immaculate :

And, though a mighty king, yet fishermen
Shall be his followers and subjects then ;

With whom, against the world, the flesh, and devil,

He shall make war ; and pride, and all that's evil,
Humility shall quell ; and the sharp sword,
With which they fight, shall be the sacred word,
Establish'd on a rock, from which foundation
It shall be then divulg'd to every nation.

Q. What was the tenth and last sibyl?

A. The Egyptian sibyl, who prophesied of number three.

But which of us observes the sacred three,
Three Persons in one God, in unity?
That individual essence who dares scan,
Which is, shall be, and, ere the world began,
Was in eternity? When, of these three,
That do compose the holy trinity,
The second person, wisdom, shall intomb
His majesty within a virgin's womb :

True

True man, true God, still to the best three
link'd;

True light shall shine, and false stars be extinct.

Q. What is the history about the seven sleepers?

A. They were born in the city of Ephesus, in the time when Decius, the heathen Roman emperor, persecuted the Christians: these good men, being of that profession, whose names were, Maximilian, Marcus, Marcianus, Darius, John, Seraphion, and Constantius, to avoid great torture and the worship of idols, fled into a cave, and, after long prayer, fell asleep. The emperor caused the mouth of it to be stopped.

Decius and his generation being dead, Theodosius, a Christian, succeeded them; in whose reign a citizen of Ephesus, as he was making a lodge for his shepherds in that cave, opening its mouth, these seven Christians awaked and saluted each other, supposing they had slept but one night. They gave Marcus five shillings to go to the city to buy bread: he found all things altered, for the people talked of Christ and
of

of the true God without fear: and, offering his money for bread, the baker stopped him, saying, "Surely, young man, you have found some hidden treasure;" and had him before the council, where he declared, that he and six more had hidden themselves yesterday in a cave, to escape the cruelty of Decius, and took that money with them. The emperor, being made acquainted with it, went in person to the cave, where he found the others alive and in good health, and took them home. They lived not long after, but died all seven in one day. They slept two hundred years.

Q. What battle was that which was fought where none escaped?

A. The Red Sea, where Pharoah and his whole host were drowned.

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THE END.

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